

The Electric Mercury

U.S. Army Medical Command Electronic News Summary, October 2003

**For more on these and other important stories, see October 2003 printed issue of The Mercury.
This is a service of the Public Affairs Office, Headquarters MEDCOM.**

Three companies receive new contracts for TRICARE

The next generation of TRICARE contracts have been awarded to Health Net Federal Services, Rancho Cordova, Calif.; Humana Military Healthcare Services, Louisville, Ky.; and TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corp., Phoenix, Ariz. The new contracts will replace the current seven contracts next year and will be simpler to administer. Each contract includes at least a nine-month transition, plus five one-year option periods for health-care delivery and support. Turnover of services in the newly aligned regions will be phased in, starting with the West region on June 1, 2004, and will be completed by November 2004.

Adapting to AKO helps avoid extinct Army career

One popular theory is that a large meteor crashed into the Earth. As a result, the dinosaurs perished and the mammals thrived. A few years ago, another meteor hit, at least figuratively. We call it Army Knowledge Online. Since 1999, AKO has delivered tools, information, and services to help the Army serve the country any time and anywhere. AKO is the pivotal tool in transforming the Army into a knowledge-based organization. As the one-stop source for Army information, AKO is changing the way the Army does business. How well soldiers and civilians adapt to AKO will determine whether they trot in the footsteps of the dinosaurs or the mammals.

Experts ready for stress in returning vets

Mental-health experts don't know what combat-stress reactions to expect from service members returning from the war in Iraq. Some could be disturbed or demoralized by stressors from the consequences of combat, such as handling remains of civilians, enemy soldiers or U.S. and allied personnel. Or stress could come from dealing with POWs, witnessing homes and villages destroyed by bombing or a number of other battlefield stressors. Some reactions are common, but if they persist, mental-health experts say, soldiers should seek help.

DoD stresses care of families

Few occasions are more joyous or stressful than the birth of a child, said David S. C. Chu, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, as Defense Department officials launched the new family-centered care initiative. The new TRICARE Management Activity program offers expectant mothers and their families enhanced services from the first obstetric visit through birth and follow-on pediatric care. The goal is to meet individual needs, involve fathers and other children, and make services more convenient for expectant and new mothers. One aim is to make the whole process more comfortable and meaningful even when the service member is absent. The process to change the way military treatment facilities offer obstetric care began more than a year ago and is based largely on patient feedback.

Other important stories in this month's edition of the *Mercury* include:

- October brings a new Fiscal Year, and each AMEDD member in some way is a “fiscal agent” for the AMEDD, writes Army Surgeon General and MEDCOM Commander LTG James B. Peake. Not just senior managers, but clinicians writing prescriptions and appointment clerks getting patients into our facilities instead of downtown impact fiscal accountability.
- Casualties, mostly local nationals, are brought to the U.S. Army hospital on Bagram Air Field daily. They need blood, and 32nd Medical Logistics Battalion’s Blood Support Unit provides it.
- Defense officials say QuikClot clotting agent saved 19 warfighters in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- Warfighters need sleep or missions may fail, says Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.
- After years of neglect under Saddam Hussein, Iraq's health-care system is slowly moving ahead, says the Coalition Provisional Authority’s senior adviser to the Iraqi Ministry of Health.
- The Sixth Annual Force Health Protection Conference and Army Medical Command Public Affairs and Marketing Conference draw more than 1,600 to joint meeting in Albuquerque.
- The video camera scans a fragile woman lying in an ICU bed in Guam, while Tripler Army Medical Center experts examine her from over 3,000 miles away and make recommendations.
- The 832nd Medical Company (Air Ambulance), a multistate National Guard unit, fills in for deployed Fort Lewis, Wash., unit to rescue hikers, mountain climbers and forest firefighters.
- Photo page shows Army medics in Afghanistan: LTC Jim M. Nold, Third Special Forces, comforts sick child; Aque Mamad tries dentist chair donated to hospital by 452nd Combat Support Hospital; 48th Combat Support Hospital does mass-casualty exercise; 1LT Tammy Stephenson, 719th Medical Detachment, vaccinates dog; Italian CPT Ferderco Lulardo and MAJ Eric Romanucci of 946th Forward Surgical Team check child at orphanage. Related front-page photo shows CPT Mary J. Literski, 452nd Combat Support Hospital nurse, treating 10-year-old.
- Fort Sam Houston wins men’s and women’s Varsity A competition at MEDCOM Softball Tournament. Fort Polk wins men’s Varsity B. Shirley Wickery, a Fort Sam Houston civilian, is honored as best overall player. Twenty-one teams took part. (With All-Tournament team list)
- Photos: Dr. Mustafa Kamil and CPT Stephen Hinman treat Iraqi on civil-affairs mission; LTC Corina van de Pol of Army Aeromedical Research Lab checks eyes in Mexico, as Lions Club volunteer; Rio Grande Valley residents line up for free care from Texas National Guard medics in Operation Lone Star 2003; Fort Carson MEDDAC medics unload “patients” from plane during mass-casualty exercise; portable refrigerator keeps blood products; Italian soldier Maurizio Romano gives blood to help wounded American in Afghanistan; Fort Drum physician John Sloboda swims Lake Placid Ironman competition; William Starnes, a pharmacist, and David Feltwell, physical therapist, 67th Combat Support Hospital, compete in German Ironman.
- Letters-to-the-editor criticize research done for Mercury’s Korean War series and ask when the Army started allowing women to wear fingernail polish, earrings and bright lipstick in BDUs.
- Along with the holiday season come holiday treats and sweets that can damage teeth, warns U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine’s MAJ Georgia dela Cruz.